

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda – AMENDED (2)
February 6, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive, Windsor, NS

Agenda is subject to changes up to and including during the meeting

This meeting is open to the public. It will not be livestreamed on YouTube



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1. Call to Order / Introductions
 2. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
 3. Announcements
 4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – April 25, 2024
(Notes from unofficial/no quorum meetings on June 20, 2024 and October 30, 2024 have been included for review, no approval required.)
 5. New Business
 - a) Draft Accessibility Plan Review (formerly 5. b))
 - b) Committee Terms of Reference / Election of Chair and Vice-Chair (Appendix D, page 32 of the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy, attached) (formerly 5. a))
 6. Next Meeting Date / Meeting Adjournment

WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, 76 Morison Drive, Windsor, NS

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Present:

Michel Bourgeois, Resident Member
Denise Long, Resident Member
Councillor Chrystal Remme
Pegah Memarpour, Davis Pier
Tina McKay, Building & Fire Official
Amie Deleavey, Resident Member
Jennifer Davison, Resident Member
Carmen Dewar-Miller, Admin Assistant

Roseanna Boyd, Resident Member
Kevin Waters, Active Living Coordinator
Jordan Stephens, Resident Member
Troy Burgess, Public Works Operations Manager
Mark Phillips, CAO
Melissa MacAskill, Resident Member
Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

1. Call to Order / Introductions – Staff Member Waters called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He acknowledged that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. West Hants further acknowledges the 50 African Nova Scotian communities whose 400-year history has contributed to the provinces culture, history and legacies. We are all Treaty People. Based on conversation with our community partners at Glooscap, Staff Member Waters expanded on this statement, as it is not just the land, but acknowledgement of all of the pieces that come from and beyond the land.

As this was the first meeting of the Accessibility Committee since the new council was elected, there were round table introductions. Regrets were received from Resident Member, Amie Deleavey. Staff Member Waters introduced the evening's presenter, Pegah Mermarpour from Davis Pier.

2. Approval of the Agenda, including additions or deletions
Staff Member Waters requested a friendly amendment to the agenda to review the draft plan before the Committee TOR and Election of Chair and Vice-Chair. There were no objections.
Moved by Resident Members Davison and Bourgeois that the amended agenda be approved.
Motion Carried
3. Announcements – No announcements
4. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – April 25, 2024
(Notes from unofficial/no quorum meetings on June 20, 2024 and October 30, 2024 have been included for review, no approval required.)

Moved by Resident Members Davison and Bourgeois that the April 25, 2024 meeting minutes be approved.

Motion Carried.

5. New Business

a) **Draft Accessibility Plan Review with Pegah Mermarpour from Davis Piers (moved from item b to item a)**

Staff Member Waters provided some background on this draft **Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility Strategy Plan**. Consultants at Davis Piers were brought in to assist with the plan in October 2024. They had previously helped with the Municipality's current Accessibility Plan. This consolidated plan will include the Anti-Racism and Hate Plan and will be used by our committee and also the Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive (DEI) Communities Committee. Although the province requires three-year updates, this plan has been created to span ten years, including both immediate and extended priorities. Staff Member Waters acknowledged Resident Members Bourgeois, Stephens and Boyd, who were part of the working group that helped create this draft plan with consultation from the community at large.

Pegah Memarpour, a consultant from Davis Piers, joined the meeting via Zoom to walk the committee through this early version of the draft plan. Consultant Memarpour will provide rationale and insight into the approach taken. There are over 100 actions in this ten-year strategy, with consolidation of accessibility and anti-racism plans. There was consultation with the community at large and current Accessibility and DEI committee members. This will be a high level recap and overview of the work done and efforts put in.

Consultant Memarpour will give committee members approximately a week to go through the plan and provide feedback via email, phone or by reaching out to Staff Member Waters.

As part of this plan review, it is critical to identify the immediate top priorities including low hanging fruit or long-term project type actions. If there are pieces that members do not understand, they should be flagged or highlighted. Consultant Memarpour reminded the committee that she is sharing a very early draft. There are still missing pieces, to be filled in through collaboration and iteration during this review and through the requested feedback.

The document's welcome page offers a high level introduction to the plan and supporting work. There follows a land acknowledgement, words of appreciation, and a thank you to all contributors.

Pictures from the engagement sessions are included. Statistics, survey data and demographics have been provided from the Municipality. There is acknowledgement of the diversity within the region, including a breakdown, which provides context. Shared responsibility is addressed, setting the stage for how this document should be read. The work and related actions of the two committees are highlighted. They will play a role in accountability and moving the work forward. This plan is the responsibility of all, not just the Municipality – a community effort.

Staff Member Waters feels there is a need for working group representation in this section. He would like to see the participants' names included when thanking contributors. There was consensus that including the names would add value and reinforce that this plan was a cooperative effort between the Municipality and its citizens.

Consultant Memarpour reviewed the process for creating this document, including the following steps:

- **Set Up**, by establishing a working group
- **Learn**, by connecting with community leaders and organizations to capture a broad set of voices (pre-engagement). This resulted in some great advice. Reviewed and utilized pre-existing information (Rad Report, current accessibility plan) as a jumping off point to leverage and build from.
- **Invite**, community conversations through a survey, pamphlets, posters, social media and community events and activities. Attendance at community events was key to raising awareness and receiving feedback.
- **Listen**, to more than 200 people share their experiences, perspectives and ideas to help identify actions and initiatives.
- **Summarize**, in real time while being intentionally straight to the point and easy to read.
- **Validate**, through sharing the draft plan with the two committees and Glooscap Council, allowing for folks to weigh in.

At this point it was noted that the community name of Three Mile Plains needed to be corrected from Three Miles Plains in the draft plan.

The next section addressed *What We Wish Could Have Been Different*.

This document won't change everything but it is a step in the right direction and an ongoing effort that everyone is excited about. Glooscap Council was approached late in the year to share the work that was happening. Due to the holidays and events in January, the group was unable to have a meaningful engagement at Glooscap and these voices were not captured in this draft plan. There is an action item within the plan to address this going forward.

There is recognition that some of this work had to happen over the holidays, which is challenging. This led to less voices being heard from, but a significant number were still captured. Additionally, some of the survey information came in at both ends of the spectrum from respondents that shared. Caveats were added where relevant.

The next section of the draft plan addressed *Actions*, with five key areas of focus:

1. Creating More Welcoming Community Spaces

This section is related to public, municipal and business spaces in the community. There are some spaces viewed as doing things right, being inclusive, showcasing and celebrating diversity, and safe for people. With these identified spaces as examples, how do we continue to create spaces that are accessible and inclusive and welcoming for everyone across the board. One way is to ensure that standards are created with spaces where can navigate the community and the space of West Hants (sidewalks for example). This is a topic that spans accessibility, equity anti-racism and diversity. Actions are the most important part. The West Hants Sports Complex was cited a space where great things are happening. Still work to be done. Survey results that highlighted differences between respondents were included. Colour coding was used to group actions together. Some actions need to happen sequentially. There are 22 actions under this category. They are open to feedback on prioritization, language, etc.

There was a question regarding the original plan that included targets set to cover specific items. One example was to have Rick Hansen certification as part of building design plans. This is not referenced here. If we don't identify these

things specifically, how will they be budgeted for and achieved? This plan seems more aspirational than specific.

Consultant Memarpour offered that if there is a specific action that you think is missing, send her a note and it can be looked at. She requested clarification on targets. Would these be metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs)?

In the original plan, there were more tangible, measurable targets. If going before Council to request funding, you need more specific information.

If there are actions in the original plan that have not been completed and might need to get moved forward, they can be identified and prioritized as a three-year priority. We can get more granular and highlight these items. Some will require a post-strategy work plan and implementation, with an idea of what success will look like. There was agreement on this go forward.

Staff Member Waters noted that work related to built environment pieces may have to be elevated to a different timeline based on the 2030 deadline.

Per Consultant Memarpour, this could be separated out as its own action. She references a table in the appendices that will outline responsibility and timeline for this work. This table could be one of the spaces where those pieces live, broken out into the two separate timelines.

The provincial built environment standards should be released soon. They will not be Rick Hansen level, but they are robust, based on the last draft presented. This is an opportunity to decide which standards are referenced in our draft plan. There was agreement that the provincial built environment standards would be a good baseline for referencing in this plan.

2. Increasing Access to Information, Spaces and Programs

There is a need to ensure all spaces are accessible to people, as currently they are not. Examples would include local businesses, sidewalks, street or ramps. This needs to be improved and changed with actions around it and also around the maintenance on the work that has already been done. The province has a goal to be accessible by 2030.

There was feedback received regarding the need for public education and awareness training for local businesses. Opportunities to build awareness and share information where possible were highlighted. Items of focus include safe, accessible streetscapes (lighting, sidewalks, ramps), and ensuring that any barriers (physical and financial) that do exist to things like municipal programs and transportation are targeted.

There are a significant number of actions here, with some being pulled from the current accessibility plan where the work had not been completed.

Staff Member Waters added that they have been discussing expanding this section and identifying the responsible person/persons (Municipality, staff, community partners, etc.) for each action. He referenced the Active Transportation (AT) Plan as there are sections related to that and existing in both plans concurrently. The AT Committee could be assigned responsibility on items where plans are in alignment.

3. Combating Racism and Discrimination

This page and this space acknowledges and shares the information that there were divergent opinions on racism in the community. Some feedback was received in the survey responses that racism isn't a thing and we should stop talking about it. There were also many examples and emotional conversations where people shared that they have experienced or witnessed some type of hate, racism or discrimination in the community. There is a desire for better awareness and training for all.

4. Authentic Partnership and Community Building

This important piece involved looking at other municipalities that are also doing this work across Canada. What are their key priorities and focus areas? The importance of relationship-building stood out, and continuing these meaningful relationships with advocacy groups, residents and community organizations. So many positive examples to see, with a desire for shared spaces, opportunity to celebrate cultures and promote diversity. How can we utilize community halls, kitchen spaces and community events and find opportunities to move different initiatives forward.

5. Municipal Leadership, Programs and Services

What can the Municipality do? What are some critical pieces there when it comes to actions. While intended as a community strategy, the Municipality can provide leadership in creating welcoming and accessible spaces. Municipal staff and leadership are critical. Actions for staff would be related to ensuring the right training and onboarding processes. That the committee work has clear terms of reference and continues to increase representation from diverse groups.

Within these five areas of focus there are a total of 106 action items.

Staff Member Waters acknowledged that as this work was only completed 24 hours ago, committee members did not have much time to formulate questions. Questions that arise after this meeting can be sent to Consultant Mermarpour or to him. It is important to think of some items to immediately prioritize. Now would be the time to bring ideas forward for inclusion.

A question arose as to whether there was time to get anything into the coming year's budget.

Staff Member Waters and Clerk Snair are looking at this. There may be a line item already set up in the budget for accessibility.

The final section of the plan involves **Commitment and Next Steps**. What does implementation look like? Supporting the work planning and moving it forward. This early draft is being shared on purpose. It has been a collaborative effort that they want to continue and to be implemented, not just sit on a desk. Give people have the opportunity to weigh in, with feedback on language, action changes, overall look and feel, and top priority action items.

This ended the presentation of the draft plan.

Resident Member Bourgeois extended thanks to Consultant Mermarpour and Staff Member Waters and all involved in getting the plan to this point.

Consultant Mermarpour left the meeting.

- b) **Committee Terms of Reference / Election of Chair and Vice-Chair (moved from item a to item b)** (Appendix D, page 32 of the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy, attached)
Resident Member Bourgeois was acclaimed as Committee Chair and Resident Member Davison was acclaimed as Vice-Chair.

6. Next Meeting Date / Meeting Adjournment

The next meeting will be held on March 27, with the goal going forward to meet on the last Thursday of every other month

Moved by Resident Members Davison and Long that the meeting be adjourned.

Motion Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

X

Committee Chair